

Nadler Demands DOJ Investigation on White House and EPA 9/11 Response

Sunday, 24 August 2003

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- In a letter to the Department of Justice today, Congressman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) called for a thorough federal investigation on the EPA's handling of clean-up of World Trade Center contaminants following 9/11 and the White House's role in instructing EPA officials to downplay concerns of air quality in Lower Manhattan.

Nadler's call for an investigation follows the release of the EPA Inspector General's report stating that EPA failed to initiate a proper clean-up plan of WTC dust and that the White House influenced EPA officials to claim that the air in Lower Manhattan was safe to breathe, without adequate evidence to substantiate such a claim.

Nadler, who has called on the EPA to initiate a proper clean-up of WTC contaminants since September of 2001, stated, "It is reprehensible that the EPA lied to the public and continues to allow New Yorkers to breathe unsafe air laden with asbestos, dioxin, and many other contaminants from the WTC. The EPA's failure to take proper responsibility to clean up schools, apartments and office buildings in Lower Manhattan, as well as their inaccurate statements that the air was safe to breathe, shows a dangerous pattern of neglect and deception at the expense of the health and lives of New Yorkers. The Department of Justice must begin an investigation to fully assess the EPA's response -- or lack thereof -- to the clean-up of WTC dust and also the White House's role in swaying EPA officials to downplay concerns of air quality because of 'competing considerations,' as stated in the IG's report."

Congressman Nadler's letter to the Department of Justice is as follows:

August 25, 2003

The Honorable John Ashcroft

Attorney General of the United States

Department of Justice, room 4400

950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Mr. Attorney General:

I am writing to request that the U.S. Department of Justice conduct an immediate investigation into the White House role in instructing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to issue misleading and inaccurate health information relating to the release of toxic substances in the aftermath of the World Trade Center (WTC) collapse and the EPA's continuing role in covering up the truth. As the Member of Congress representing "Ground Zero," I have been contending for at least one and a half years that the EPA deliberately misled the public about the safety of the air in residences, workplaces and schools, thus endangering the health and lives of thousands of people in Lower Manhattan.

As you may know, on August 21, 2003 the Inspector General of the EPA released a report, "EPA's Response to the World Trade Center Collapse: Challenges, Successes, and Areas for Improvement." That report asserts that the White House manipulated the information received by the public by directing the EPA to issue falsely reassuring statements and delete cautionary ones, including instructions on how to take necessary precautions in handling the contaminants because of "competing considerations." While I take issue with several of the statements in the report, such as the assertion that the EPA was "not obligated" to respond to the emergency under the National Contingency Plan, the IG's report raises serious questions regarding improper White House interference in the dissemination of public health data and points to the potentially grave consequences of the EPA's erroneous pronouncements.

My allegations about EPA malfeasance are based on numerous sources of information, including testimony gathered at a February 2002 hearing conducted by the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Clean Air, Wetlands and Climate Change, and two hearings held at my request by the EPA National Ombudsman. In addition, I released a "White Paper on Lower Manhattan Air Quality" that I would be pleased to forward to your office.

I was encouraged to read an Associated Press article citing a Justice Department's statement that my call for an investigation would be reviewed. I will be available anytime to meet with you to discuss my request.

I look forward to your immediate reply to my urgent request.

Sincerely,

Jerrold Nadler

Member of Congress

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